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OPEN LETTERS.

THE AMERICAN BOTANIST.

UNDER THE TITLE of "The American Botanist, vol. I, no. 1" a four-page octavo leaflet was issued September 15, 1896. While no place of publication is stated, the editor of this newly launched periodical gives his temporary address as the Gray Herbarium, Cambridge, Mass. It is true that he has received such facilities of reference to books and specimens as are usually accorded to visiting botanists, but to prevent a possible misunderstanding, it seems necessary to state that his publication has no official connection whatever with this establishment.—B. L. ROBINSON, *Curator of Gray Herbarium*.

ESCHSCHOLTZIA MEXICANA-PARVULA.

ESCHSCHOLTZIA finds its extreme eastern limit in the Organ mountains of New Mexico, and the adjacent region about El Paso. The pretty little species there found, which I have had occasion to study in connection with its bee-visitors, is commonly known as *E. Mexicana* Greene, Bull. Cal. Ac. Sci. 1 : 69. 1885. I want to know why it is not to be designated *E. parvula* (A. Gray), for it is assuredly the *E. Douglasii* var. *parvula* Gray, Plantæ Wrightianæ 2 : 10. 1853. The few words of description given by Gray, with the locality, readily identify the plant. There is no other *parvula* of prior date. Is it not just a little absurd to refuse to recognize a name for a species, because first applied in a varietal sense? Such a course seems hardly to accord with a Darwinian conception of species, nor is it supported by the codes of nomenclature.

Another principle which is generally recognized, in zoology at any rate, is that the specific name must be at least as old as the names applied to varieties of the species. Thus it will sometimes happen that the type form of a species is by no means the commonest form; it may be quite a rare variety. On Darwinian grounds I see no objection to this, as the oldest (and therefore true) type of a variable species is hard to ascertain, and the probabilities are perhaps against its being the most common.

It follows from the above that *Philibertella Hartwegii* (Vail, 1897) *heterophylla* (Engelm., 1856-7), as given in Bull. Torrey Bot. Club 24 : 308. 1897, will not do. The species must stand as *Philibertella heterophylla* (Engelm.), and the *Hartwegii* form, if properly belonging to the same species, can be treated as a variety.—T. D. A. COCKERELL, *Mesilla Park, N. M.*